

SUMMARY

In the preparation of a county development plan, the future demand for land and natural resources which the plan must seek to accommodate must be forecast. Such future demand depends in part upon future resident population and economic activity levels. Control of changes in population and economic activity levels lies largely outside the scope of governmental activity and outside the scope of the physical planning process. Future population and economic activity levels must, therefore, be forecast.

Surveillance activities under the continuing regional planning program point to increasing uncertainty with regard to future social and economic conditions in Southeastern Wisconsin, including Waukesha County. To deal with this uncertainty, the Regional Planning Commission has adopted an "alternative futures" approach to the preparation of needed projections for areawide systems-level planning. This approach involves the postulation of alternative future growth scenarios for the Region and the preparation of related projections of population and employment at the Region and county level, thereby providing a broader basis for plan design and evaluation.

Under the alternative futures approach, three alternative future growth scenarios were postulated for Southeastern Wisconsin. The sets of conditions postulated for each "future" were intended to represent consistent, reasonable scenarios of future population change, as well as change in economic activity in the Region through the year 2010. Two scenarios, the high-growth scenario and the low-growth scenario, were intended to represent reasonable extremes; the third scenario, the intermediate-growth scenario, was intended to represent a most likely future.

The economic changes that may be expected under a high-growth scenario assume a return to the types of changes that have historically occurred in the regional economy. Under this scenario, there would be no long-term damage to the regional economy as a result of the 1979 through 1983 recession, with long-term economic growth rates attaining levels at or slightly below national averages.

Under the intermediate-growth scenario, it was assumed that the recovery of the economy from the 1979 through 1983 recession would be delayed somewhat, and would be initially weaker than

the national recovery as the heavy industrial and manufacturing firms once dominated the regional economy continue to close unprofitable plants and limit operations in the restructuring efforts that are necessary for survival during poor economic conditions.

The economic conditions that may be expected under a low-growth economic scenario assume a departure from long-term trends under which the Region was able to maintain or increase its relative share of national employment. Under the low-growth scenario, the recovery of the regional economy from the 1979 through 1983 recession would be a lengthy process, with regional employment remaining depressed for about a decade.

The development of the alternative regional population growth scenarios was based upon explicit consideration of a number of the social and economic factors that may be expected to affect county and regional population and employment levels. These factors include birth, death, and migration rates, labor force participation rates, and the relative anticipated strengths of various sectors of the regional economy. To the extent practicable, assumptions regarding such factors were expressed quantitatively in the development of the alternative growth scenarios and the projections of future population, household, and employment levels which may be expected under such growth scenarios. County level population, household, and employment projections generated under alternative growth scenarios can, however, be influenced by alternative centralized or decentralized geographic distribution patterns. A centralized distribution pattern would, compared to historic trends, seek to accommodate a greater proportion of envisioned increment in population and employment for the Region in the major existing urbanized areas and a smaller proportion of increment in population and employment levels in outlying counties adjacent to those existing urbanized areas. A centralized distribution pattern would thus accommodate, within the Milwaukee urbanized area, higher population and employment levels than otherwise projected. Outlying counties, including Waukesha County, would, under a centralized distribution pattern, accommodate lower population and employment levels than otherwise projected. Conversely, a decentralized distribution pattern would accommodate, within the Milwaukee urbanized area, lower population and employment levels than otherwise projected, while Waukesha County would accom-

moderate higher population and employment levels. Combining alternative future growth scenarios with centralized or decentralized distribution patterns will result in alternative projections of economic and demographic activity levels in the Region and Waukesha County.

A series of four alternatives for growth and change taking into account various growth scenarios and the centralized or decentralized distribution patterns were identified for consideration in the preparation of the Waukesha County development plan, including an intermediate-growth centralized alternative, the alternative upon which the adopted regional land use plan is based; a low-growth decentralized alternative; an intermediate-growth decentralized alternative; and a high-growth decentralized alternative. The aforementioned alternatives will provide a good representation of the range of possible future population, household, and employment levels which may be expected within the Region and Waukesha County through the year 2010 and thus should serve as the basis upon which alternative and recommended County development plans can be prepared and evaluated.

Highest year 2010 population and household and employment levels envisioned for Waukesha County, as well as subareas, or planning analysis areas, within the County, would occur under the high-growth decentralized alternative, while the lowest levels would occur under the low-growth decentralized alternative. Current population and household growth trends in Waukesha County are generally consistent with population and household growth trends envisioned under the intermediate-growth alternatives. Current employment growth trends in the County, however, are significantly higher than the trends envisioned under the intermediate-growth alternatives, and indeed for some planning analysis areas already exceed levels envisioned under the high-growth alternative. It should be recognized, however, that employment levels are subject to wide variations over time as a result of changes in local as well as State and national economic conditions. Thus, there are no assurances that employment growth within the County will continue at current rates.

A summary of the change in population, households, and employment levels envisioned for Waukesha County under the alternative futures follows:

1. Future population levels for Waukesha County would vary considerably under the four alternatives considered. Under the intermediate-growth centralized alternative, the resident population of Waukesha County would increase by about 59,600 persons, or about 20 percent, from 304,700 persons in 1990 to 364,300 persons in the year 2010. The year 2010 population levels for the County under the other alternatives could, however, range from a low of 300,800 persons, about 3,900 persons, or 1 percent, less than the 1990 level, under the low-growth decentralized alternative, to a high of 529,800 persons, about 225,100 persons, or about 74 percent, more than the 1990 level, under the high-growth decentralized alternative.
2. Under the intermediate-growth centralized alternative, household levels of Waukesha County would increase by about 26,600, or about 25 percent, from about 106,000 households in 1990, to 132,600 in 2010. Year 2010 household levels for the County under the other alternatives could, however, range from a low of 121,900 households, about 15,900, or 15 percent, more than the 1990 level, under the low-growth decentralized alternative, to a high of 177,200 households, about 71,200, or 67 percent, more than the 1990 level, under the high-growth decentralized alternative.
3. Under the intermediate-growth centralized alternative, employment levels within Waukesha County would increase by about 27,800 jobs, or about 16 percent, from 172,300 jobs in 1990 to 200,100 jobs in 2010. Year 2010 employment levels for the County under the other alternatives could, however, range from a low of about 182,400 jobs, about 10,100 jobs, or about 6 percent, more than the 1990 level, under the low-growth decentralized alternative, to a high of 257,600 jobs, about 85,300, or about 50 percent, more than the 1990 level, under the high-growth decentralized alternative.

